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Future of Facility Being Evaluated

The U.S. Department of Energy is evaluating the future of the Waste Experimental Reduction Facility at the Waste Reduction Operations Complex. A recent audit by the Inspector General's Office and new air emission standards are prompting the evaluation.

The Department of Energy-Idaho Operations Office is currently evaluating the future of the Waste Experimental Reduction Facility. DOE-Idaho will factor into its decision new emission standards set by the Environmental Protection Agency, Site Treatment Plan commitments with the state of Idaho, future waste volumes to be treated and a recommendation by the Office of the Inspector General to close the facility.

New air emission standards set by the Environmental Protection Agency, known as MACT - Maximum Achievable Control Technology - require approximately \$5 million in upgrades to the incinerator and stack to be in compliance. The decision, with justification, on whether or not to upgrade the facility or perform closure under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act must be presented to the public in July.



Under current law, DOE must treat the mixed waste generated at the INEEL. WERF is the only facility currently available to treat this waste.

The Site Treatment Plan is a schedule agreed to by the state of Idaho for the treatment of hazardous and radioactive waste at the INEEL. The plan looks at waste generated on-site and a limited amount of hazardous and radioactive waste generated at other DOE facilities, and the schedule for getting the waste out of storage, treated and the residuals sent out of state for final disposal.

In December 1999, an audit report from the Office of the Inspector General recommended closure of WERF. Failure to operate WERF at the capacity permitted by the state of Idaho was the basis for the closure recommendation. The two factors contributing to the shortfall in reaching capacity were excessive downtime between incineration campaigns and the majority of on-site waste not being sorted, segregated and characterized for incineration.

If the decision is made to shut down the facility, commercial and DOE off-site treatment and disposal options will be considered.



Public meetings on the decision to upgrade or close WERF will be held in July 2000.



The *INEEL Reporter* is a bimonthly DOE newsletter for the public produced by the INEEL Environmental Management Program.

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Agencies Sign Two Records of Decision

Two Records of Decision, covering the Test Area North and the Power Burst Facility/Auxiliary Reactor Area, were signed by the agencies to continue remediating contamination at the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory.

The U.S. Department of Energy, Environmental Protection Agency and the state of Idaho have recently signed Records of Decision for Test Area North (Waste Area Group 1) and Power Burst Facility/Auxiliary Reactor Area (Waste Area Group 5).

At the Test Area North, contaminated areas that will be cleaned up include underground storage tanks containing radioactive and hazardous wastes, a contaminated soil site, a disposal pond, pits where materials were burned and the site of a fuel leak.

Test Area North was constructed between 1954 and 1961 to support the Aircraft Nuclear Propulsion Program to develop and test designs for nuclear-powered aircraft engines. President Kennedy terminated the program in 1961 and the Test Area North facilities were converted to support a variety of other DOE research projects.

The agencies completed an environmental investigation in 1997, called a comprehensive remedial investigation/feasibility study, which looked at the extent of contamination at Test Area North and evaluated potential remedies. Of 94 potential release sites identified in and near the facilities, 11 were identified as requiring some cleanup actions to reduce the potential risk to human health and the environment. Two of those sites are being addressed in previous cleanup decisions and another is being evaluated in a separate investigation.

The Record of Decision for the Power Burst Facility identifies the agencies' plans to clean up five contaminated soil sites, a sanitary waste system and an underground storage tank.

The Power Burst Facility was constructed in the late 1950s for nuclear reactor safety experiments. It consists of five operational areas. The last reactor was shut down in 1985. Current activities at the PBF focus on waste management and waste reduction activities for the INEEL.

The Auxiliary Reactor Area was constructed in the late 1950s to support the Army Nuclear Program. It has four operational areas, three of which have not been used since the late 1980s and are in varying stages of decontamination and dismantlement. The ARA-IV facility was decontaminated and dismantled in 1985, and the area is now used occasionally for testing explosives.

Fifty-five potential contaminant release sites were identified within the PBF and ARA areas during the comprehensive investigation. Forty-eight require no remediation, while the remaining seven sites will be cleaned up to reduce the potential risk to human health or the environment. The seven sites are contaminated with radioactive and nonradioactive constituents



Briefly

DOE Extends Comment Period On High-Level Waste EIS; Announces Fort Hall Public Hearing. In response to public request, the U.S. Department of Energy and the state of Idaho as a cooperating agency are extending the public comment period for the Draft Idaho High-Level Waste and Facilities Disposition Environmental Impact Statement to April 19, 2000, an additional 30 days. This will result in a comment period totaling 90 days. In response to public request, one additional hearing has been added in Fort Hall, Idaho, to be held at the Fort Hall Tribal Business Center on March 2, 2000. An open house begins at 5 p.m. followed by presentations by DOE, the state of Idaho and the Shoshone-Bannock tribes at 6 p.m. and question and answer sessions with the public. DOE will consider all comments transmitted or postmarked by April 19, 2000.

Jackson Office New Location. The new address for the INEEL's Jackson Office is 310A E. Pearl Ave., Jackson, WY 83001-3669. The mailing address is P.O. Box 3669, Jackson, WY 83001-3669. The office hours remain the same (Monday through Friday, 9 to 5 p.m.). The phone number is (307) 732-2990 and fax number is (307) 732-2991.

Get Involved

Citizens are encouraged to get involved in decision-making at the INEEL by reviewing and commenting on documents, attending public meetings, and requesting briefings or tours. Information about these public involvement activities can be obtained through:

Target Mailing Lists

Mailing lists are continually updated so interested citizens and groups can automatically receive general or specific INEEL information (electronically or through U.S. Mail). You can be added to mailing lists by calling the INEEL toll-free number.



Toll-Free Phone Number

To obtain specific documents or other information, request a speaker or briefing on a particular topic, inquire about public meetings or public comment periods, or schedule a tour of INEEL, call the INEEL toll-free number at 1 (800) 708-2680.



Videos/Instructional Materials

Videos and brochures are available on a variety of subjects including the Snake River Plain Aquifer, waste management, and general INEEL history. To request these items, call the INEEL toll-free number.



Internet

The INEEL home page is available at <http://www.inel.gov>. Specific INEEL environmental information is available at <http://environment.inel.gov>. The INEEL Administrative Record is available at <http://ar.inel.gov/home.html>.



Information Repositories

DOE maintains three information repositories throughout Idaho (INEEL Technical Library in I.F., Boise State University and University of Idaho Campus). Information repositories are collections of documents that provide detail and backup information on INEEL cleanup projects.





Calendar

March

- ▶ 2 Fort Hall briefing on the Draft Idaho High-Level Waste and Facilities Disposition Environmental Impact Statement at the Fort Hall Tribal Business Center. An open house begins at 5 p.m., and presentations and question and answer sessions begin at 6 p.m.
- ▶ 21-22 Citizens Advisory Board meetings in Idaho Falls at the Colonial Theater, 498 A St., Tuesday from 8 to 6 p.m. and Wednesday from 8 to 5 p.m.



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